

***Go Set A Watchman* Excerpt**
Harper Lee

The last couple pages of chapter 17

[.....]

(Scout) "Then what are you, a snob or something?"

(Atticus) "Yes. I'll accept being called a snob when it comes to government. I'd like very much to be left alone to manage my own affairs in a live-and-let-live economy, I'd like for my state to be left alone to keep house without advice from the NAACP, which knows next to nothing about its business and cares less. That organization has stirred up more trouble in the past five years—"

(Scout) "Atticus, the NAACP hasn't done half of what I've seen in the past two days. It's us."

(Atticus) "Us?"

(Scout) "Yes sir, us. You. Has anybody, in all the wrangling and high words over states' rights and what kind of government we should have, thought about helping the Negroes? We missed the boat, Atticus. We sat back and let the NAACP come in because we were so furious at what we knew the Court was going to do, so furious at what it did, we naturally started shouting nigger. Took it out on them, because we resented the government. When it came we didn't give an inch, we just ran instead. When we should have tried to help 'em live with the decision, it was like Bonaparte's retreat we ran so fast. I guess it's the first time in our history that we ever ran, and when we ran we lost. Where could they go? Who could they turn to? I think we deserve everything we've gotten from the NAACP and more."

(Atticus) "I don't think you mean what you're saying."

(Scout) "I mean every word of it."

(Atticus) "Then let's put this on a practical basis right now. Do you want Negroes by "by the carload in our schools and churches and theaters? Do you want them in our world?"

(Scout) "They're people, aren't they? We were quite willing to import them when they made money for us."

(Atticus) "Do you want your children going to a school that's been dragged down to accommodate Negro children?"

(Scout) "The scholastic level of that school down the street, Atticus, couldn't be any lower and you know it. They're entitled to the same opportunities anyone else has, they're entitled to the same chance—"

(Atticus) Her father cleared his throat. "Listen, Scout, you're upset by having seen me doing something you think is wrong, but I'm trying to make you understand my position. Desperately trying. This is merely for your own information, that's all: so far in my experience, white is white and black's black. So far, I've not yet heard an argument that has convinced me otherwise. I'm seventy-two years old, but I'm still open to suggestion.

(Atticus) "Now think about this. What would happen if all the Negroes in the South were suddenly given full civil rights? I'll tell you. There'd be another Reconstruction. Would you want your state governments run by people who don't know how to run 'em? Do you want this town run by—now wait a minute—Willoughby's a crook, we know that, but do you know of any Negro who knows as much as Willoughby? Zeebo'd probably be Mayor of Maycomb. Would you want someone of Zeebo's capability to handle the town's money? We're outnumbered, you know.

(Atticus) "Honey, you do not seem to understand that the Negroes down here are still in their childhood as a people. You should know it, you've seen it all your life. They've

made terrific progress in adapting themselves to white ways, but they're far from it yet. They were coming along fine, traveling at a rate they could absorb, more of 'em voting than ever before. Then the NAACP stepped in with its fantastic demands and shoddy ideas of government—can you blame the South for resenting being told what to do about its own people by people who have no idea of its daily problems? The NAACP doesn't care whether a Negro man owns or rents his land, how well he can farm, or whether or not he tries to learn a trade and stand on his own two feet—oh no, all the NAACP cares about is that man's vote.

(Atticus) "So, can you blame the South for wanting to resist an invasion by people who are apparently so ashamed of their race they want to get rid of it?"

(Atticus) "How can you have grown up here, led the kind of life you've led, and can only see someone stomping on the Tenth Amendment? Jean Louise, they're trying to wreck us—where have you been?"

(Scout) "Right here in Maycomb."

(Atticus) "What do you mean?"

(Scout) "I mean I grew up right here in your house, and I never knew what was in your mind. I only heard what you said. You neglected to tell me that we were naturally better than the Negroes, bless their kinky heads, that they were able to go so far but so far only, you neglected to tell me what Mr. O'Hanlon told me yesterday. That was you talking down there, but you let Mr. O'Hanlon say it. You're a coward as well as a snob and a tyrant, Atticus. When you talked of justice you forgot to say that justice is something that has nothing to do with people—"

(Scout) “I heard you on the subject of Zeebo’s boy this morning . . . nothing to do with our Calpurnia and what she’s meant to us, how faithful she’s been to us—you saw nigger, you saw NAACP, you balanced the equities, didn’t you?”

(Scout) “I remember that rape case you defended, but I missed the point. You love justice, all right. Abstract justice written down item by item on a brief—nothing to do with that black boy, you just like a neat brief. His cause interfered with your orderly mind, and you had to work order out of disorder. It’s a compulsion with you, and now it’s coming home to you—”

She was on her feet, holding the back of the chair.

(Scout) “Atticus, I’m throwing it at you and I’m gonna grind it in: you better go warn your younger friends that if they want to preserve Our Way of Life, it begins at home. It doesn’t begin with the schools or the churches or anyplace but home. Tell ’em that, and use your blind, immoral, misguided, nigger-lovin’ daughter as your example. Go in front of me with a bell and say, ‘Unclean!’ Point me out as your mistake. Point me out: Jean Louise Finch, who was exposed to all kinds of guff from the white trash she went to school with, but she might never have gone to school for all the influence it had on her. Everything that was Gospel to her she got at home from her father. You sowed the seeds in me, Atticus, and now it’s coming home to you—”

(Atticus) “Are you finished with what you have to say?”

(Scout) She sneered. “Not half through. I’ll never forgive you for what you did to me. You cheated me, you’ve driven me out of my home and now I’m in a no-man’s-land but good—there’s no place for me any more in Maycomb, and I’ll never be entirely at home anywhere else.”